

3/21/01--DRAFT

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): Establishing Site Eligibility for “Restricted Open Sites”

Regional Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All Regions

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance on establishing site eligibility as “restricted open sites” for particular situations in which children from low-income areas are transported to SFSP sites located in non-needy areas.

Under current program regulations, “open” and “restricted open” sites in SFSP demonstrate their eligibility through the use of area school or census data. To qualify, these sites must be located in low-income areas and serve children in the surrounding community. If a site is not located in a low-income area, or if it serves a defined group of children, then it operates as a “closed enrolled site” and must demonstrate, through the collection of individual eligibility applications or direct certification information, that at least 50 percent of the children it serves are eligible for free or reduced price meals.

We have become aware of several recreational programs where children from low-income areas are bused to sites in non-needy areas outside of their communities. In addition to recreation activities, these programs provide meals through SFSP. In order to board the bus, each child must have submitted a registration form signed by a parent. On a daily basis, any child who is registered is permitted to board the bus to attend the program. The only limitation on a child’s ability to participate is available space on the bus.

We believe these sites essentially operate as “restricted open sites” as defined in program regulations, except that the site itself is not located in a low-income area. As “restricted open sites” (as opposed to “closed enrolled sites”), they would be permitted to establish site eligibility based on area school or census data rather than through the collection of eligibility information for the individual children in attendance. We believe this interpretation is in keeping with the intent of the law to make SFSP available to children from low-income areas, and will reduce paperwork and ease administrative burden for State agencies and sponsors.

In order to approve a site as a “restricted open site” in these situations, all of the following conditions must be met:

- The site must draw its attendance exclusively from low-income areas. This means that all of the pick-up points for children must be located in eligible areas

(i.e., areas in which at least 50 percent of the enrolled children are eligible for free or reduced price meals, based on school or census data).

- The program must initially be open to broad community participation. Limits that are placed on participation must occur on a daily basis, not at the beginning of a program's operation for the summer during the registration process, and occur for reasons of security, safety or control.
- The sites must not charge a fee for children to attend. Sites that charge fees would not be "open to broad community participation", and therefore should be classified as "closed enrolled sites."
- The site must not allow children from the surrounding non-needy area to attend.

Please contact Melissa Rothstein if you have any questions concerning this memorandum.

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